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VOL. 133

No. 20

Jimmy Draper hospitalized

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — James T. Draper Jr., a longtime Southern Baptist leader who served as president of LifeWay Christian Resources from 1991-2006, was admitted to Baylor Regional Medical Center in Grapevine, Texas, on June 4 and is in the intensive care unit, according to family members.

The preliminary diagnosis is that Draper, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, had a severe allergic reaction to a recent myelogram procedure. Myelograms involved x-rays of the spinal column while using an injectable contrast dye. No other details on this condition were available by deadline for this issue.

Parchman inmates receive degrees

PARCHMAN, Ms. (BP) — In some ways, the New Orleans Seminary (NOBS) extension center graduation May 20 mirrored any other seminary graduation ceremony.

The service included singing, prayers, a sermon, and the recognition of God-called ministers. Proud families and friends were in attendance to share in the joyous occasion. The 28 men receiving undergraduate degrees even wore traditional black graduation caps and gowns — but this was no ordinary graduation service and these were not ordinary graduates.

This graduation, held at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, took place under the watchful eyes of numerous prison guards. Instead of a beautiful chapel, the setting was the prison's stark visitor's center. Striped prison pants were visible below the hem of each robe. Nineteen of the graduates are serving sentences of 25 years or more; 13 of those have life sentences.

Much of the funding for the Parchman extension program comes from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and its churches. Jim Futral, MBCB executive director, told the graduates that they have been a blessing to Mississippi Baptists.

"It is the cross of Jesus that brings us together," Futral said. "As I visit with you, I hear that in your voice and I see it in your faces, and I thank God that you and I have had the privilege of coming to the cross together. Thank God for what has happened in your lives."

Even though many of the graduates will never experience a life outside the walls of Parchman, they each expressed joy and hope. As trained ministers, the inmates are better equipped to reach their mission



NEW GRADUATES — The striped prison pants visible below the hem of the graduates' robes served as a reminder of the unique nature of the ceremony at New Orleans Seminary's extension center graduation on May 20 at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. (BP photo)

field: Parchman prison. One smiling graduate, Tommy Smith, said he has found new purpose in helping others during his time as a student. In his ministry to others, Smith himself has been changed.

"Ministering to other people is something that brings out the best in me," Smith said. "That's something I didn't understand until God got a hold of me and changed my life."

Smith said the seminary training program has not only given him the skills he needs to minister to others, it also has provided opportunities to share his faith.

In his charge to the graduates, Chuck Kelley, the seminary's president, noted that the ceremony did not signify an end or a completion but a commencement, a beginning. "It is not just what you have finished that we are recognizing; it's what you are about to do and what lies ahead that has such great significance," Kelley said.

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 1, Kelley noted that God often calls unlikely ministers. When God works through these unlikely people, He receives all the glory, Kelley said.

"The Bible tells us the ones God loves using most are the weak and the broken and the defeated," Kelley said. "Because when God does something through them, everybody knows it is God is doing it."

Kelley said the world has reason to forget or even fear the graduating class at Parchman, but God is preparing do mighty things inside the prison through the graduates.

Using a glove, Kelley illustrated how God works through the weak and unlikely to accomplish His purposes. A glove can do nothing on its own, Kelley said. It is useless without a hand. On a hand, though, the glove can do many things.

"It's not the glove, it is the hand inside," Kelley said. "What you are as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is a glove on the hand of God."

Kelley said with their own hands, they can break someone's life and smother hope but as a glove on God's hand, they can bring restoration and become bearers of hope.

"Today marks the day to celebrate what you have learned and how you have grown," Kelley said, "but more importantly, today marks the day God takes your glove off the shelf... so that He might make a difference."

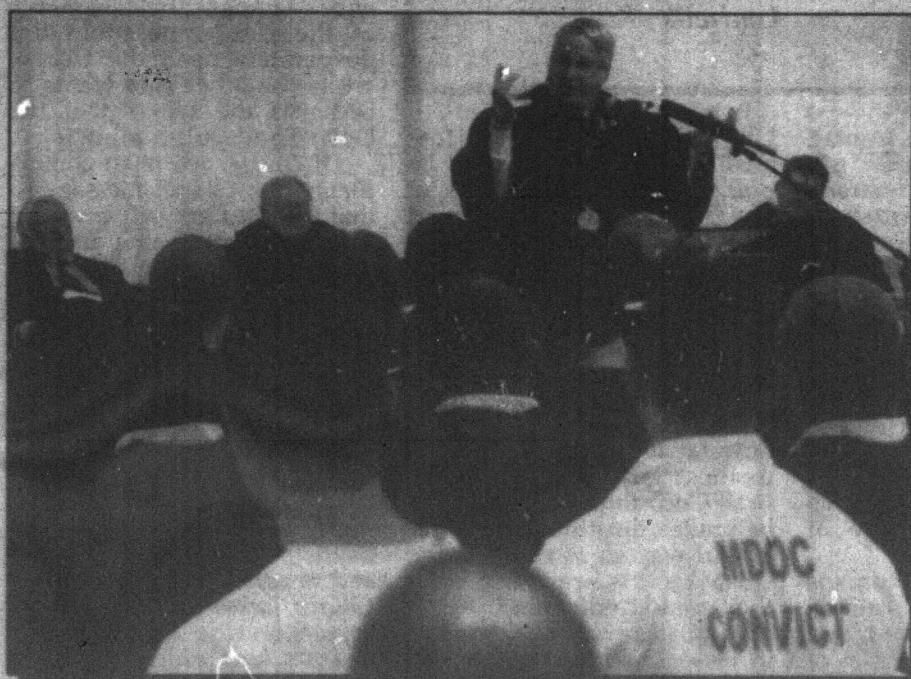
The program at Parchman is modeled after a similar program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. The Angola extension started 13 years ago when Warden Burl Cain, the keynote speaker at the Parchman graduation, approached the seminary about the need for educational opportunities at the prison.

NOBS began by offering a nationally-accredited associate degree in ministry in 1995. The program was expanded to include an accredited bachelor's degree in 1997. Since the start of the program, Angola has seen a significant drop in violence.

Johnny Bley, director of the seminary's Parchman extension, said graduates of the program are making an impact on the prison by serving as chaplains' assistants and Bible study teachers. The graduates are leading a variety of ministry and educational activities, including Experiencing God groups and GED training groups.

Bley, who previously supervised the seminary's extension program at Angola, said others are even teaching basic literacy to their fellow inmates.

"To see the accomplishment and the hard work that they have put in, it just means the world to me," Bley said of the current class. "To see the joy and the diligence that they have put forth, it's very rewarding."



HOPE, RESTORATION — New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley (at podium) called the seminary extension center graduates at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman "gloves on the hand of God," capable of bring hope and restoration to broken lives. (BP photo)

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Is Ida your relative?

Humankind, meet your newest ancestor — a lemur-like creature about the size of a small housecat. Yes, we are told, scientists are convinced this 47-million-year-old fossil affectionately named Ida is indeed the much-sought "missing link" that neatly wraps up the evolutionary trail to man as we know him today.

Paleontologist Jorn Hurum of the Natural History Museum in Oslo, told National Geographic News that Ida bridges the evolutionary split between higher primates such as monkeys, apes, and humans, and their more distant relatives such as lemurs. "This is the first link to all humans," he said, "the closest thing we can get to a direct ancestor."

"This specimen looks like a really early fossil monkey that belongs to the group that includes us," Brian Richmond, a biological anthropologist at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., told National Geographic News.

"This little creature is going to show us our connection with the rest of all the mammals; with cows and sheep, and elephants and anteaters," said British naturalist Sir David Attenborough in an article in The Guardian newspaper of London.

The more you look at Ida, the more you can see, as it were, the primate in embryo.

On what are these scientists basing their conclusions? Well, Ida has a small bone near her heel (the talus) that resembles the bone of the same name in higher primates, and its toes have nails instead of claws. Her arms and legs are short like humans, and her face somewhat resembles a human face. Lastly, she has forward-looking eyes that would have given her the ability to judge distance.

That's it. Apparently, those are the main points that tie Ida to humans. Combined with the fact that Ida was unearthed more than 25 years ago and is just now coming to light, the sketchy comparison to humans is causing thoughtful people to ask questions.

"Given that the animal is described as 'something like a combination lemur monkey,' it is probably a mosaic or chimeric form (composed of characteristics from two or more groups combined into a well designed whole — in this case a combination of lemur and monkey characteristics)," wrote Kurt Wise, who holds a doctorate in paleontology from Harvard University, in a statement to Baptist Press.

"There are many such forms in the present (platypus, lesser panda, pronghorn, etc.) — none of which are evolutionary intermediate forms, but which are a testimony of a wise Creator God Who can combine characteristics in a wide variety of ways and create from them a marvelously designed organism," Wise wrote.

"Nothing about this fossil indicates that it was a human ancestor. Rather, it is a remarkably well-preserved, lemur-like creature looking nothing like an 'apeman,'" Ken Ham, president of the apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis, told Baptist Press.

"Besides, why would a fossil found 25 years ago suddenly become a media sensation? Only because of a major PR push by the financial backers of a new book and television documentary about the fossil," Ham said. "Yet even the peer reviewers of the scientific paper on the fossil asked that the human origins hype be removed."

That's one of the reasons Ida has become such a hit after more than 25 years of obscurity. Hurum, the Oslo paleontologist who purchased Ida for his museum, has written a book and is involved with documentaries on Ida. "You need an icon or two in a museum to drag people in," Hurum told the



Ida

Guardian. "This is our Mona Lisa and it will be our Mona Lisa for the next 100 years."

Philip Gingerich, a University of Michigan paleontologist who is a member of the Ida research team, when asked by the Wall Street Journal why the conclusions on Ida were not presented through the proper scientific channels, said, "There was a TV company involved and time pressure. We've been pushed to finish the study; it's not how I like to do science."

Sorry, guys. Nice try. Ida may have been a cute little primate, but she's nothing more than the artifice of a modern marketing machine.

Why can't we just stick to the idea that we are wonderfully made by a sovereign Creator, just as the Bible records? That sounds a lot better, and happens to be the truth.

GUEST OPINION:



Keep it in context!

By David Sills
Louisville, Ky.

It may be effective, it may attract a hearing, it may not be offensive to the hearers, but that is not contextualization — that is marketing.

Others argue Paul never contextualized the Gospel and so they do not either. The reality is that these very detractors contextualize every Sunday. They preach in English, not Greek or Hebrew. They wear suits and ties, not robes or togas. They illustrate their sermons with modern life, not from daily life of ancient biblical times.

Paul wrote in Romans 10:13-15 that all who call on the Lord may be saved and then went on to ask a series of questions pointing out the importance of hearing the Gospel for salvation.

Ultimately, he asked, "How shall they hear?" It would be pointless to preach the Gospel in English to monolingual Mandarin speakers. Instead, we must preach the Gospel in culturally appropriate ways that are faithful to God's Word.

When missionaries and preachers seek to contextualize the Gospel, they may wonder how far is far enough and how far is too far. Paul gives us those guidelines. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that he made adjustments in every lawful way so as to relate the Gospel to his hearers in ways they could understand.

He also gave the parameters in verse 23 where he wrote, "I do it all for the sake of the Gospel." The glory of God and reverence for His revelation

should guide us in the limits of contextualization so that we never say or do anything that would bring reproach on Him or alter the Gospel message. The goal of contextualization is to be culturally relevant and faithful to God's Word.

Undoubtedly, the edgy language proponents push the limits of preaching and influence demographic segments of the U.S. population that desperately need the Gospel while the other side wants to preserve the sanctity of the Gospel and pulpit ministry.

Of course, we must contextualize the Gospel message so that our hearers can properly understand it. Shame on us if we ever debate that. The current debate may be over marketing techniques, but let us never sacrifice the necessity of critical contextualization.

Sills is a professor at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he serves as director of Great Commission ministries. He formerly served as a Southern Baptist missionary in Ecuador and as pastor of Woodland Hills Church, Jackson. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press and has been edited for length. The full text can be viewed at <http://www.baptistpress.org/BPFIRSTPerson.asp?ID=30610>.

Obama expands homosexual observance

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Democratic President Barack Obama has named June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, issuing a proclamation that goes even further than those of former President and fellow Democrat Bill Clinton in its pro-homosexuality slant.

Clinton was the last president to issue such a proclamation, first doing so in 1999 and then in 2000 before he left office. Obama's 572-word proclamation calls for ending the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy which was put in place under Clinton, and also includes the phrase "transgender" for a first time.

Clinton's proclamations never referenced transgenderism, a category that includes cross-dressers and people undergoing sex change operations. Another first: Obama's proclamation reiterates his support for same-sex civil union laws.

Republican President George W. Bush never issued a proclamation commemorating Gay Pride Month. Clinton's proclamations differed from Obama's in calling June "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month," leaving out "bisexual" and "transgender."

The proclamation is posted on the White House website but is difficult to find and as June 2 was not listed under the website's category of proclamations — a fact that some homosexual activists were criticizing. Evangelicals voiced strong disagreement with Obama's

proclamation, much like they did in 1999 when Clinton issued his proclamation and Southern Baptist Convention messengers responded by passing a resolution rebuking Clinton for doing so.

"For a president who pledged to bring us together, Mr. Obama persists in doing the exact opposite on all things homosexual," said Bob Stith, the Southern Baptist national strategist for gender issues and representative of the denomination's Task Force on Ministry to Homosexuals.

"This issue for most evangelical Christians is not bias or prejudice. It is simply maintaining the freedom to speak the truth about Scripture. It is one thing to be loving and tolerant. It is something else altogether to encourage pride in what God clearly says is sin.

"The bottom line is that if God defines something as sin, we do no one any favors by attempting to blur those lines. Nor will we be doing future generations any favors by obliterating barriers God has put up for our protection. On several occasions the Bible uses the phrase 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' In every case it turned out badly," Stith said.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, criticized Obama for once again calling for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, which prevents homosexuals from serving openly in the military.

"This, according to people in the military, would have catastrophic consequences for our nation in a time of war," Land said.

"Some surveys of military personnel indicate that perhaps as high as 10% of the all-volunteer forces will resign from the military if Don't Ask, Don't Tell is rescinded," he said, quoting a December Military Times poll, "and it would hit heaviest in the non-commissioned officer ranks — the sergeants and the chiefs and the people who make it go at the operational level.

"It would seriously impact our military's ability to do the job that we've asked them to do in keeping us safe."

The homosexual community traditionally has called the month of June Gay Pride Month to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Inn riots, which took place in New York City and are viewed as helping launch the modern homosexual rights movement. In his proclamation Obama says he is proud to be the first president to "appoint openly LGBT candidates to Senate-confirmed positions in the first 100 days of an administration."

Obama also calls for passage of a hate crimes bill and for "ensuring adoption rights" for homosexuals.

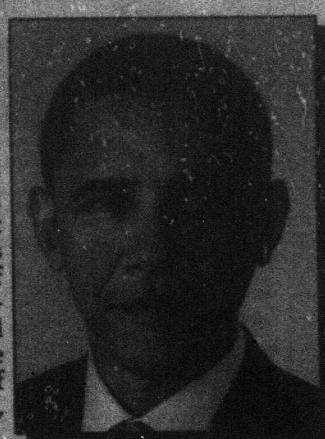
Noting the stark contrast between the previous administration and the current administration, Land said, "Elections have consequences." Underscoring how

far the homosexual rights community has come in less than two decades, Land recalled how he and other religious leaders met with former President George H.W. Bush and complained about Bush becoming the first president to invite representatives of homosexual organizations to the White House.

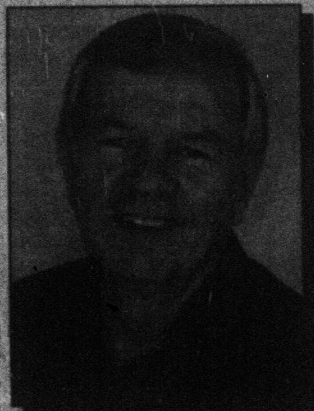
"We've come a long way," Land said, emphasizing it has not been for the better. "Those of us who believe in the continuing truth of God's revealed Word in Scripture would not consider the distance traveled between the issue in our meeting with President George H.W. Bush and President Obama's proclamation as progress, but a further sign of the moral and spiritual deterioration of our culture."

Said Stith: "God has not just issued a laundry list of arbitrary rules for His creation. He has made it clear that He desires for us to experience His joy and peace. As the creator He also understands what will make that possible — and what will impede His plan for us. Clearly the true loving thing to do is to hold up God's standard and encourage all people to strive for that. To declare pride in anything that God says is sin is not love. It is no different than removing a sign that says 'Road closed. Bridge out.'"

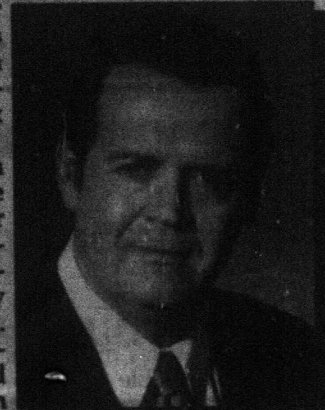
Editor's note: Obama's proclamation can be found on the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-LGBT-Pride-Month. For more information about the SBC's outreach to homosexuals, visit www.sbc.thewayout.com.



Obama



Land



Land

Unwed births rise

The percentage of births to unmarried mothers is increasing worldwide, and nearly four in 10 U.S. births were to unmarried women in 2007, according to a recent report by the National Center for Health Statistics. Birth rates have risen considerably for unmarried women in their 20s and over, the report said, and nonmarital birth rates are highest for Hispanic women followed by black women. The study, released in May, said births to unmarried women in 2007 totaled 1.7 million, up 26% from 2002. Sixty percent of births to women ages 20-24 were to unmarried women, up from 52% in 2002, and 32% of births to women ages 25-29 were to unmarried women, up from 25% in 2002. Among the 14 countries analyzed in the report, the percentage of all live unmarried births in the United States — 40% — ranks somewhere in the middle. USA Today noted the U.S. figure is up from 18% in 1960. The historic increases in nonmarital childbearing result from many factors, the center said, including substantial delays in marriage beginning with the baby-boom generation and changes in sexual activity, contraceptive effectiveness and use, and abortion. Many children are born to couples in cohabiting relationships, with about 40% of nonmarital births to cohabiting women. Also, attitudinal changes have impacted the statistics, the report said, as societal disapproval that unmarried mothers faced at one time has diminished sharply.

Looking back

10 years ago

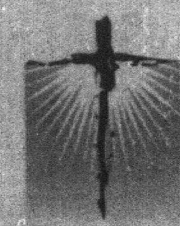
The 1999 Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra is featured June 8 during the 1999 Southern Baptist Church Music Conference at First Church, Nashville.

20 years ago

With temperatures hovering in the mid-90's, about 1,800 Southern Baptists knock on doors throughout Las Vegas prior to the Southern Baptist Convention and record 350 professions of faith, according to the Home Mission Board.

50 years ago

Southern Baptist ministers believe editors of their denomination's papers should print controversial news. Out of 26 responses to a query in a leading Baptist magazine, only one person spoke against printing controversial news.



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

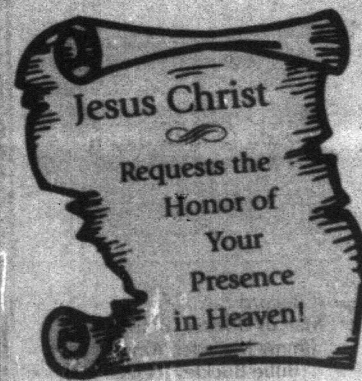
THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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No. 22



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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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By Charles Marx, 1932-2004
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EIVS: HYP: CYOHQ-
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Clue: Q = Y

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm Seventy: Four

A FRAID OF NOTHING

Sometimes people who proclaim that they are afraid of nothing are announcing that they may have more courage than they have brains. Fear is not always a bad thing and can be used for helping, guiding, and blessing our lives. It is a healthy thing and a right thing for a child to learn early on that being afraid of actions and their consequences, or irresponsible behaviors and their penalties, or uncontrollable hurtful things around us, need to be avoided. On the other hand, some people's lives are controlled, shaped, and hurt by their fear of things that they should not even be concerned about.

Recently on a Saturday, I was in a residential neighborhood where there were two young guys who appeared to be about 13-14 years old and they were doing something that I had never seen before. One of them was on one side of the road and the other was on the other side. As a car would begin to approach them, they would take a stance on either side of the road as though they were pulling a cable or a rope. Seeing them from a distance, it looked as though a couple of kids were in a tug of war. It was a mime presentation of a rope that was not there. It was an intentional gag, a trick to see if they could get cars to slow down or even stop so that they would not hit the imaginary whatever-it-was that they were pulling on. I had never heard of this gag, but I am here to tell you that it worked.

Not every car slowed down and only a few stopped, but enough of them were affected that these two young guys were getting a kick out of the afternoon. There was nothing except air between the two of them, but it sure looked like something was out there and many of the drivers did not want to hit whatever it was. I am not recommending that kids do this for I am sure that there could be some danger involved — including someone who saw it late, swerved to try to miss the rope, and hit a kid.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

I would not want that to happen, but as I watched these young men playing their Saturday afternoon game out on the side of the street I thought about how many people are hitting the brakes or swerving through life trying to miss some of the fears that are before them.

I chuckled as I watched these two young guys carrying out their prank, but it is no laughing matter to see people frozen in the middle of the street of life because of things that are not even there. I am talking about spiritually mature people that sometimes are shocked, afraid, stunned, and even stopped by things that appear to be there but are not in the road of their life. So many people across the country are in distress because of the financial downturns and the economic woes they are caught in that it really should drive all of us to reevaluate whom we actually trust — ourselves, our abilities, our own resources to get us by, or the Lord.

Did the Lord's Prayer change or do I remember that it says, "Give us this day our daily bread?" Do you suppose that God can manage that and when tomorrow becomes this day that He can manage that

day as well? Maybe more than us looking for the Dow Jones to go up, God wants us to look up and put our confidence in Him.

I was visiting with a man the other day in a church and he was talking about how concerned he was and how disruptive all of the economic trouble was to him. He said to me, "I just do not know if I have enough money now to last until I die." I asked him, "Did you have enough before this economic crisis hit?" He was honest to say, "Well, I do not know." I was hoping that I had not enough. "I certainly was not trying to be mean or even smart about it but I said, 'Would it help any if you just dropped dead today? Would that make you feel any better?'" He smiled and said, "I don't think so."

Some of us may be looking out there into the future and seeing a couple of young guys on the sides of the road and what we think is a great obstacle is not even there. The wise king of the Old Testament reminds us that you cannot figure everything out and what you see may not be what really is when he tells us, "Trust in the Lord with all of thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all of thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

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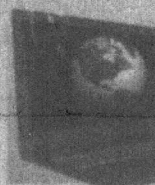
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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

- Beulah Church, Lexington:** Revival, June 14-16; Sun., 11 a.m.; 7 p.m. nightly; Lyn Nations, Doug Lawson, Mike O'Brien, and Roger Richardson, speakers; Joe McGraw, music.
- Bowlin Church, Sallis:** Homecoming, June 14, 11 a.m., followed by food and fellowship; David Guess, speaker.
- County Line Church, Puckett/Mendenhall:** Homecoming, June 14, 10:45 a.m., followed by noon meal and fellowship with special music; Mickey Ferguson, speaker.
- County Line Church, Union:** Revival, June 14-17; Sun., 11 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, speaker; David Jay, pastor.
- Mount Zion Church, Rosebud Community, Leake County:** Revival, June 14-17; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Keith Fulton, speaker; Eddie Pilgrim, music.
- Harmony Church, Brookhaven:** Homecoming, June 14; entertainment with Song of Grace, 10 a.m.; services, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Clarence Young, speaker; pastor Owen King, music.



Visit us online at www.mbc.org to learn more about Mississippi Baptist opportunities.

Vacat

NASHVILLE for many years in Southern Baptist Convention 2008 is equal to but the shorter churches is r

LifeWay Church "the most successful have to positive to receive Jesus Wooley, LifeWay

Despite the said he sees a number of churches fewer than five

"Our information Vacation Bible School on their Annual VBS that lasted than five days, than five days,"

Wooley described create a total recreation, even part of this is a losing out on so

Wooley said it takes to offend children.

Statistics for million children

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RICHMOND Despite financial caused by downturn, Southern Baptist Convention gave \$141 million the work of through the 20 Christmas International Mission the total, which million short of lion goal, is fund many of ready to go.

The \$30 million equivalent to support the w mately 667 international sionaries for a figure for the \$141,315,110.2 more than nine of the record \$150.4 million.

"We are grateful difficult economic Southern Baptist amazing general \$141 million to Moon Christ said Jerry Rank Mission Board

"When market hurting financial es are experiencing giving, faithful port of the Mission Board priority given sions and our reach a lost Christ," said Mississippi native of Mississippi Co

The final follow a M

Education Bible School strong, but with troubling trend

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — As has been the case in recent years, the number of professions of faith at Southern Baptists' Vacation Bible School (VBS) equal to 25% of the convention's baptisms, shortening of the VBS week by some churches is raising concern.

Way Christian Resources' VBS is recognized as the most successful outreach tool Southern Baptists have to positively affect children in making a decision for Jesus Christ as their personal Savior," Jerry LifeWay's VBS specialist said.

While the evangelistic value of VBS, Wooley sees a trend that does concern him — the shortening of churches that are shortening VBS to less than five days is on the rise.

Information from churches that submitted a VBS report and/or gave information in the Annual Church Profile tells us that 76% had VBS that lasted five days, seven percent lasted more than five days, and 17% shortened their VBS to fewer than five days," Wooley said.

Wooley described VBS as "carefully organized to provide a total experience with Bible study, missions, evangelism, crafts, and music. When any of this is abbreviated or left out, the children are not getting something of spiritual value."

Wooley said he hopes churches will do whatever it takes to offer an entire five days of VBS to their children.

Statistics for VBS 2008 show that of the nearly 2.9 million children, youth, and adults who participated,

nearly 87,000 made a decision to receive Christ.

"That is tremendous news," Wooley said.

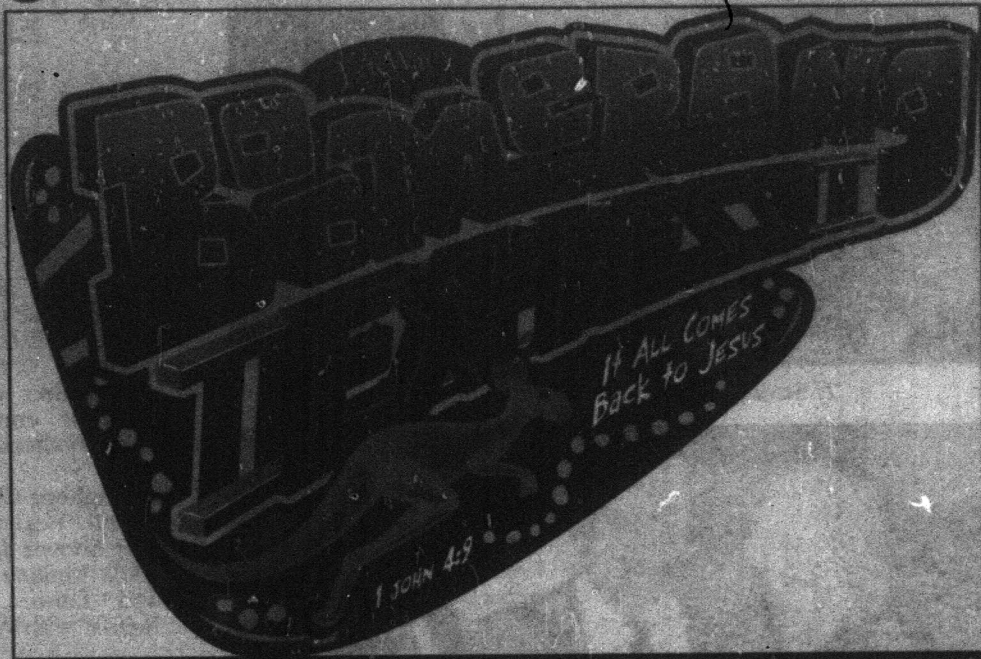
Another trend is the rise in the number of churches hosting VBS in the evening — 69% in 2008.

"Staffing issues seem to be the primary reasons churches are hosting more evening VBS programs," Wooley said.

"With more parents employed and more children involved in day camps and other child care, along with schools that are now doing year-round schedules, it just seems to make a lot of sense. It's also more convenient for the churches who offer teenagers and adults their own VBS."

More than 25,000 churches offered VBS in 2008. Most met at their local church locations, but some conducted their VBS in parks, backyards, and at other sites.

"The bottom line," Wooley said, "is that we know



VBS makes a huge difference in the lives of everyone who participates, from the ones who attend to the ones who teach and work on recreation, decorations, snacks and follow-up. Our prayer is for everyone to have the best and most spiritually fulfilling week possible."

Rankin: missions board not able to send all who want to go

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (BP) — Because of the financial hardships caused by the economic downturn, Southern Baptists' \$141 million to support the work of missionaries in the 2008 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions — but short of the \$170 million goal, is not enough to send many of those who are willing to go.

The \$30 million shortfall is equivalent to what it costs to support the work of approximately 667 international missionaries for a year. The final goal for the 2008 offering is \$15,110.24, which is more than nine million below the record 2007 offering of \$15.11 million.

Rankin said that in these difficult economic times, Southern Baptists displayed great generosity in giving to the 2008 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Rankin, International Board (IMB) president, said that when many families are experiencing a decline in faithfulness to the support of the International Board reflects the high cost of global missions and our responsibility to a lost world for Jesus Christ," said Rankin, a Mississippi native and graduate of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton. The final offering results for a May 19-20 IMB

trustee meeting in Denver during which trustees approved the suspension of new appointments to the International Service Corps and Masters programs.

They also approved reducing the number of new appointments to the career, apprentice, associate, and journeyman programs.

New appointments will continue on a more selective basis, involving the most strategic assignments.

The IMB spends 71% of its total budget, including the Lottie Moon offering and a major portion of funds received from the Cooperative Program, on missionary support, encompassing salaries, housing, medical care and children's education. It averages approximately \$43,000 annually per missionary.

By the end of 2010, the IMB's missionary force of 5,656 is expected to fall to a level "compatible with financial resources," Rankin said.

The reduction will occur through retirements and completion of service.

"We will not be able to replace short-term personnel completing their assignments and will have to restrict the number of new personnel that can be appointed," he said.

Just a year ago, the IMB celebrated the offering hitting a historic mark. Cumulative gifts to the offering, which was initiated by the Woman's Missionary Union in 1888, topped three billion dollars.

"We are grateful for the sacrificial giving of Southern Baptists to missions," said Wanda Lee, executive director-treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham.

"This year's giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering may be more sacrificial for some than ever before considering the level of unemployment and loss of income experienced by many in our churches, and yet Christ's command to go into all the world compels us to give in support of our missionaries during these challenging times."

"I believe if we keep our hearts focused on the mandate of the Great Commission, God will be faithful in providing the people and financial resources needed to reach a world desperately in need of the hope found in Christ," Lee said.

In November 2008, IMB trustees adopted a \$319.8 million budget for 2009 — \$10 million of which was earmarked to offset the rising cost of support for the missionaries already on the field. Now, though the number of Southern Baptists who want to go and are qualified keeps growing, there are not enough funds to support them.

With the growing number of job losses and the decline in financial markets, IMB treasurer David Steverson said the organization's situation could have been far worse.

"When you consider the number of our constituency who have lost jobs and are directly affected by this economy," Steverson said, "we are grateful that the offering experienced only a six percent decline," which nevertheless is the largest dollar decrease in the history of the offering.

Over the years, the Lottie Moon offering has consistently reflected a heart for missions on the part of Southern Baptists. In the past 75 years, including this year, it has only been down four times.

Totals since 2000 have been:

2008	\$141,315,110
2007	\$150,409,654
2006	\$150,250,000
2005	\$137,939,677
2004	\$133,886,222
2003	\$136,204,648
2002	\$115,015,216
2001	\$113,709,471
2000	\$113,175,192

Rankin said the stakes have never been higher for Southern Baptists to take the Gospel to a lost world. "Never before have we seen such unprecedented response to the Gospel and opportunity to disciple the nations," he said. "God is moving through global events to open opportunities to share the Gospel as never before."

According to the 2008 IMB Annual Statistical Report, 565,967 people were baptized and 26,970 churches were started overseas through IMB missionaries and their Baptist partners. The Gospel also was shared among more than 1,190 people groups — 100 of which heard about Jesus for the first time.

"We need to realize that God has blessed Southern Baptists with numbers and resources to be His instrument to fulfill His mission to the ends of the earth," Rankin said. "One day we will stand accountable to Him for how we have used our resources."

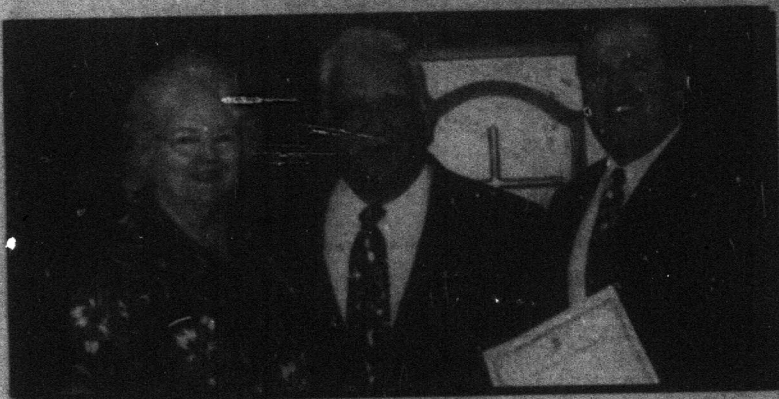
"It breaks my heart that God-called people want to go — and millions need to hear the Gospel message from them — yet we don't have the funds to send them. I pray this situation will convict our hearts and challenge His people to do whatever it takes to get the Gospel to the whole world."

Editor's note: To learn more about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, visit imb.org/main/give.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



2. Stronghope Church baby dedication



3. Hudson ordination



4. Bunker Hill Church



5. Clark ordination



6. Concord Church baby dedication



1. The youth group of Damascus Church, Flora, will present a dinner theater, *Who Dun Stole the Bride?* June 20, 6:30 p.m. Tickets, \$7 adults, \$12 couples, and \$3 children under five. For information, call (769) 232-1480 or email mrsolonb-smith@yahoo.com.

2. Stronghope Church, Wesson, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are Preston and Karla Mullins with Brayden and Lance and Marsha Raiford with William Nick.

3. Robinwood Church, Saucier, recently ordained Ron Hudson as a deacon. Shown are Agnes Hudson, Hudson, and pastor Terry L. Upchurch.

4. The Mission Friends of Bunker Hill Church, Columbia, held a bike-a-thon to raise money for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Shown, front row, are Maggie Wilks, Jonathan Hodges, Cameron Rogers, and Madison Riley; back row, Abigail Fagan, Hannah Rogers, and Leah Shivers.

5. Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, ordained Mike Clark as deacon Apr. 19. Shown are Clark, his wife, and others participating in the ordination.

6. Concord Church, Booneville, held a baby dedication May 10. Shown are the participants.

7. The GAs of Calvary Church, Oak Grove, recently hosted a tea party for the young girls and ladies of the church. Shown are some of the participants.

8. Arlington Heights Church, Pascagoula, recently burned their note of indebtedness. Shown, from left, are Pete Duke, Erich Corley, and John D. Jones.

9. Hopewell Church, McCool, held a baby dedication May 24. Shown are Cindy and Leon Stevenson, sons Micah Paul and Cooper Lee, and pastor Timothy Black.

10. Thompson Church, Amite County, recently held a deacon ordination. Shown are deacon chairman Gene Nunnery, Richard Kraft, Bobby Byrd, Bill Harvison, Mark White, Keith Deer, and pastor Brent Parker.



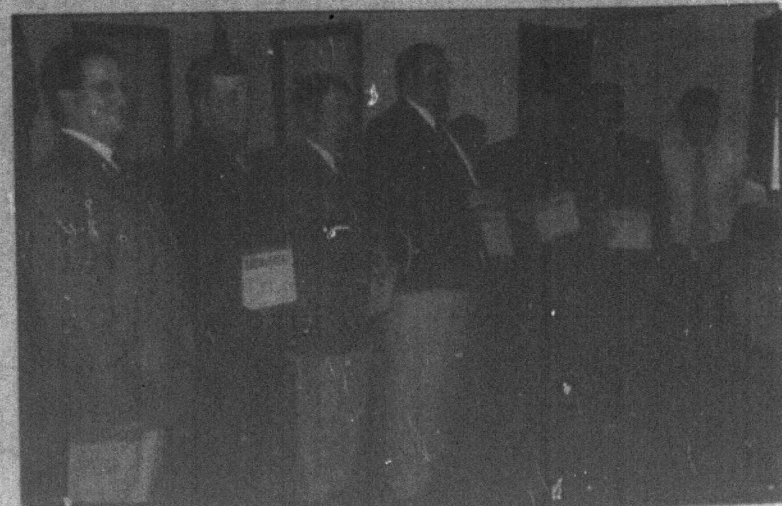
7. Calvary Church, Oak Grove



8. Arlington Heights Church



9. Hopewell Church baby dedication



10. Thompson church deacon ordination

JUST FOR THE RECORD

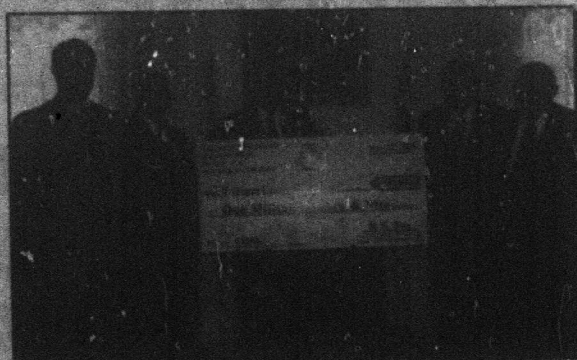
11. New Henleyfield Church, Pearl River Association, is building a new fellowship hall. Campers on Mission and the Men's Ministry of Pine Grove Church, Pearl River Association, have assisted in the construction. Shown are some of the participants raising a wall.

12. West Corinth Church, Corinth, recently recognized its children's Bible drillers. Shown are Mady Hughes and Katie Aldridge.

13. Crenshaw Church, Crenshaw recently honored B.P. Gates for 60 years of service as deacon. Shown are Gates and pastor Justin McLendon.

14. Coaltown Church, Purvis, ordained Jerry Whiddon as deacon May 31. Shown are pastor Jimmy Breazeale and Whiddon.

The Baptist Record
P.O. Box 536
Jackson, MS 39205



1. William Carey University gift

1. The William Carey University Baptist Student Union is a recipient of the Courts Redford Award for Excellence from the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The award recognizes Carey for their excellence in sending student missionaries in 2008.

2. Preview Day for prospective students at William Carey University is July 10 from 11:30 until 3 p.m. on the Hattiesburg campus. Registration and complimentary lunch is 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. in the Student Conference Center of Wilkes dining Hall followed by the welcome and opening session from 12:30 p.m. until 1 p.m. Class registration with advisors and meetings with representatives from admissions, financial aid, the business office and housing, as well as campus tours will be available from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. For more information call (800) 962-5991 ext. 103, (601) 318-6103 or visit www.wmcarey.edu.

3. William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) faculty Frank Baugh, associate dean of academic affairs and associate professor of community and behavioral medicine; Darrell Lovins, associate dean and clinical sciences and professor of family medicine; Michael Murphy, dean and vice president; and B. J. Martin, assistant dean of research and professor of anatomy, pose with Tommy King, president of WCU, following a \$1 million check presentation made by the Asbury Foundation of

Hattiesburg for construction and operation. The proposed COM is open in the fall of 2010.

4. Janice Nicholson and Linda Brooks have been promoted to new positions at Blue Mountain College. Both are BMC alumnae. Nicholson has been named the Vice President for Planning and Assessment, Graduate Studies and Special Programs, and will serve as Dean of Graduate Studies. Brooks will become Chair of the Department of Education and will continue with her teaching responsibilities.

5. William Carey University's Carey Dinner Theater will present The Melody Lingers On, The Songs of Irving Berlin June 11 - 27, and Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know July 7 - 18. Reservations are required and should be made well in advance for both shows. CDT is performed in the O. L. Quave Theatre nightly at 7 p.m. and tickets can be reserved by calling (601) 318-6221. The box office is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. The admission price of \$27.50 includes the buffet meal, program book and show.

6. The Fail-Asbury School of Nursing at William Carey University invites the public to an Open House July 17 from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. on the Hattiesburg campus. Prospective students and their families will meet nursing faculty and discuss career options related to educational and professional training in the nursing field. For more information call (601) 318-6147 or (601) 318-6301.

7. The PRO-DAY Mississippi High School Baseball Showcase will take place at William Carey University in Hattiesburg on June 17th from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., announced Jeff Gross, director of PRO-DAY Baseball. The Showcase is an opportunity for high school players (9-12 grade) to show their talents in front of professional scouts and collegiate coaches along with graduating seniors who may be looking for a college to attend. Players may register online at www.prodaybaseball.com or call: (251) 980-2300.

11. New Henleyfield Church

12. West Corinth Church Bible drillers

13. Gates and McLendon

14. Whiddon ordination

STAFF CHANGES



1. Rachel Trest

1. Fellowship Church, Hernando, has called Rachel Trest as youth summer intern. She is a sophomore at Blue Mountain College, majoring in biblical studies, and is from Hernando.



1. The Moaks

2. Calvary Church, Columbia, has called Millard Moak as pastor. Shown are Moak and his wife Melinda.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

1. Lakeshore Church, Jackson, June 14 - 17: Boomerang Express, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; K5 - 6th grade.

2. Grace Church, Philadelphia: June 19, 5:30 - 9 p.m.; June 20, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

3. Freeny Church, Carthage: June 14 - 17: Boomerang Express, 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.; ages 3 - junior high.

4. Hebron Church, Panola: June 15 - 19, 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.; Fri. family night; Team Impact, leaders; Terry Tribble, pastor.





Practical Principles / Christian Living

A Platform For Political Office

By Jimmy Porter
Miss. Baptist Christian Action Commission

On Thursday, June 4, 2009, I opened the newspaper and the headline read, "Session clock expires." This means there is no budget for next year. What is the problem? Forget the rhetoric because it is a simple axiom of Economics 101—too much demand and too little supply. There isn't enough money to go around and make everybody happy. Have you ever thought about how you would "fix" Mississippi with all her problems and needs? I have and here are a few of my thoughts, which would never get me elected to public office.

GOVERNMENT — Government has become an industry to provide jobs and instead of an organization to help us order our lives. So I would start by downsizing at the MC Capitol. Currently, Mississippi has 52 senatorial districts and 122 representative districts. Based on U.S. Census Bureau's July 2008 estimates, on average each senator represents 55,445 individuals and each house representative 24,087 individuals. Alabama's 35 senators represent 133,197 and their representatives 44,826. Georgia's 56 senators represent 172,960 while their representatives serve an average of 93,132.



Porter

Tennessee has 32 senators representing 194,215 and 98 representatives serving 63,417. Mississippi has too many senators and representatives, and we could save money by sending some of them home.

If our senators represented the average number of citizens of our neighboring states, we would only need 22 senators instead of 52; and only need 54 representatives and not 122. This would be a tremendous saving of the taxpayer's dollars. I know the arguments against downsizing but with modern technology and instant communication, we don't need 52 senators and 122 representatives.

EDUCATION — Education, I thought was to educate our children and not an industry to provide jobs. In Mississippi we have 152 public school districts. I remember when the community schools in our county were consolidated and how hard it was but the time has come for Mississippi to consolidate districts. Reducing the number of districts to half would save enormous amounts of money in overhead and administration cost and could provide for better schools and better teachers.

Several states have programs that provide graduating seniors, meeting certain standards, free college tuition. This is much needed in our state especially in areas where the hope of a better life is nothing more than a far off dream. Many say unless we have a lottery like Tennessee and Georgia we cannot offer free tuition. Lottery and gambling should not be necessary evils implemented to "benefit" society, but unfortunately, we already have casinos and gambling so let them pay for it. How?

Casinos pay an 8% state and 4% county gaming tax. The 8% tax also serves as an income tax credit benefiting non-gaming, casino-owned businesses (hotels, golf courses, stores, and restaurants). Due to the large tax credit, these businesses have historically paid zero state income tax, but if they did the tax proceeds could fund a college tuition program. Also, the program could be funded by taking half of the gambling revenue from those counties having legalized gambling and put that with the additional business income tax into an account until the education program is funded. This could be the carrot that motivates kids to stay in school and work to get a college education. It has the promise of a better life for a lot of our kids.

MUNICIPALITIES — Mississippi has approximately 295 municipalities according to the Secretary of State's Office. Wow! Does a county of 20,000 individuals need 5 mayors and all the support staff for each mayor such as City Attorney, Chief of Police, clerks, etc.? There is too much duplicity and how long can we afford to have what we want versus what we need? Local and county government must begin cooperating and unifying.

VOTER IDENTIFICATION — Voter ID has become a political football. Mississippi must get this done so as to restore integrity to our voting process. It will not discriminate against anyone and it is fair for all. There is an initiative now to get it on the ballot next year. You can go to www.ms4voterid.com to sign the petition.

Just think, restoring integrity and confidence in the voting process, reducing the number of senators and representatives, public school districts, municipalities and then providing free college tuition would make quite an impact on our state. Taxes on food items could be alleviated and car tags reduced. It is fun thinking outside the box but doubtful it will get you elected.

Jimmy Porter is director of the Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3332 or email at jporter@christianaction.com.

New Hampshire sixth state to fall to same sex marriage movement

CONCORD, N.H. (BP) — New Hampshire became the sixth state in the U.S. to legalize same sex marriage June 3 when Democratic Gov. John Lynch — who less than two months ago said he opposed such unions — signed into law a bill redefining marriage to include homosexuals.

Lynch's signature came after the legislature earlier in the day passed H.B. 73, a bill aimed at protecting religious liberty but one that critics say falls far short of its goal. The House passed H.B. 73 by a margin of 198-176, hours after the bill had passed the Senate along a party-line vote of 14-10, with Democrats in the majority.

Lynch's signatures on H.B. 73 and H.B. 436 — the actual same sex marriage bill — leaves Rhode Island as the lone New England state not to have legalized same sex marriage and caps a flurry of activity in recent months on the issue from that corner of the country.

H.B. 436 passed the legislature more than a month ago but had been held up until the religious protections bill cleared the both chambers, which are led by Democrats. The law will go into effect Jan. 1.

"We are grieved at today's action, but we are not at all surprised," Sam Taylor, pastor of Nashua Baptist Church, told Baptist Press. "Homosexual activists have succeeded in making same-sex marriage legal in New Hampshire, but they have not succeeded, nor do I believe they will ever succeed, in their real goal — to make same sex marriage honorable in New Hampshire."

"Just to keep things in perspective, today the governor of New Hampshire signed a document and changed the law but the God of Heaven has not changed any of His laws and I don't expect He will."

Kevin Smith, executive director of the conservative New Hampshire-based Cornerstone Policy Research, criticized legislative leaders' handling of the bills, particularly the Senate president's removal of a member of the conference committee who opposed same sex marriage. Without that removal, S.B. 73 would not have cleared the committee.

"The process in which the legislature has rammed this legislation through from the very beginning reeks of backroom deals and a subversion of the legislative process," he said.

"It has certainly tainted the validity of the gay marriage bill in minds of many citizens."

Vermont's Democratic-controlled legislature overrode Republican Gov. Jim Douglas' veto in April in legalizing same sex marriage, and Maine Democratic Gov. John Baldacci followed one month later by signing a same sex marriage bill that had been backed by that state's legislature, also controlled by Democrats.

Connecticut and Massachusetts previously legalized same sex marriage via court order. Rhode Island's legislature is not expected to act on such a bill this year.

Meanwhile, Nevada's legislature overrode the governor's veto May 30 in passing a bill legalizing same sex domestic partnerships, continuing a growing and often overlooked nationwide movement to grant same sex couples the legal benefits of marriage minus the name.

The law goes into effect Oct. 1 and gives same sex couples "the same rights, protections and benefits" as are provided to married couples. The law also applies to heterosexual couples.

Just two weeks ago, Washington state Democratic Gov. Christine Gregoire signed a

similar bill expanding the state's domestic partnerships law to provide same-sex couples all the state legal benefits of marriage.

Including Nevada and Washington, six states now have so-called "everything but marriage laws," which are dubbed either civil unions or domestic partnerships. The other states are California, Oregon, New Jersey, and New Hampshire. Federal benefits are not available to the couples.

The laws often are promoted as a middle of the road approach, but opponents argue that they simply are stepping stones to same sex marriage, as has been shown to be the case in New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Vermont, three states that formerly had civil unions but now recognize same sex marriage. Illinois' legislature is considering a civil unions bill.

The issue increasingly is dividing Democrats and Republicans. In Washington State, a Democratic-controlled legislature promoted the bill. In Nevada, Republican Gov. Jim Gibbons vetoed the bill, only to see the Democratic-controlled Assembly and Senate override him. The override attempt passed the legislature by the bare minimum in each cham-

ber: 28-14 in the Assembly and 14-7 in the Senate.

Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie, a Democrat, applauded the bill. An override was backed by the casino industry, which feared a threatened boycott by the homosexual community. "This is the most important civil rights legislation we've had in all my years here and I am so happy and honored to be a part of it," she said, according to the Las Vegas Sun.

In his May 25 veto, Gibbons said he was rejecting the bill in part because the Nevada constitution states that "only marriage between a male and a female person shall be recognized and given effect" in Nevada. The marriage amendment was approved by voters in 2002, 67-33 percent.

Opponents of same sex marriage say redefining marriage will have a negative impact on religious freedom and children. Austin R. Nimocks, an attorney with the legal group Alliance Defense Fund which opposes same sex marriage said earlier this year, "All non-partisan research and plain common sense tells us that children need a mom and dad, so the issue is bigger than a 'personal relationship.'"

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JUNE 11,

Muslim address: some parts good, some not so good

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — President Barack Obama's groundbreaking address June 4 to the Muslim world at Cairo University met with mixed reactions among Southern Baptists who are experienced observers of Islam and the Middle East. A transcript of President Obama's speech is available on the Internet at whitehouse.gov.

While the effort to build bridges with the Arab/Muslim world is commendable, observers said, his misstatements about the Christian Gospel and the biblical view of Israel put him at odds with what Scripture says. Baptist Press solicited observations from a number of sources:

Mike Edens

Mike Edens, professor of theology and Islamic studies at New Orleans Seminary, praised the address on several points but said Obama expressed a basic misunderstanding of both Islam and Christianity.

"First, the location of the speech at Cairo University and with Al-Azhar (Islamic) University co-hosting was wise. President Obama also did well in recognizing Western civilization's debt to Islam in so many ways, as Greco-Roman philosophy and science was maintained by Islamic society and available to spur on the Renaissance and Reformation.

"Second, we all should recognize the strengths the President brings to office. He is intelligent and an effective speechmaker. Also this speech brings to the front some of his strengths as a 'third-culture kid.' Having developed in more than one culture, TCKs are insightful analysts of the complex world of our 21st century.

"Third, he concisely presents seven tensions between Islam and American culture. He points out that the past and our differences should not define or limit our seeking a new world of peace. At several points he deals with Islamic and American stereotypes and myths. In his opening dialog with Islam he affirmed:

- America has compatible relations with Islam.
- Morocco was first to recognize the U.S.

- Muslims are part of America and provide important contributions to our society.

- We have common ideals and aspirations.

- Violent extremists threaten us all.

"In identifying potential partnership within seven areas of tension, he laid out a political, diplomatic, and cultural agenda for dialog:

- Confronting violent extremism.

- Establishing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate.

- Prevention of the spread of and elimination of nuclear weapons.

- Securing the human right of democracy for all within their context.

- Dignity for women as defined in their culture.

- Ensuring religious freedom for all.

- Achieving greater access to education and development for all.

"The President quoted effectively from both the Bible and the Qur'an. He sought to speak truth and speak from his heart, and I believe he largely succeeded. He, in his optimism and our hope, said, 'The people of the world can live together in peace.' However, I believe he then expressed a basic misunderstanding of both Islam and Christianity. He said, 'We know that is God's vision.'

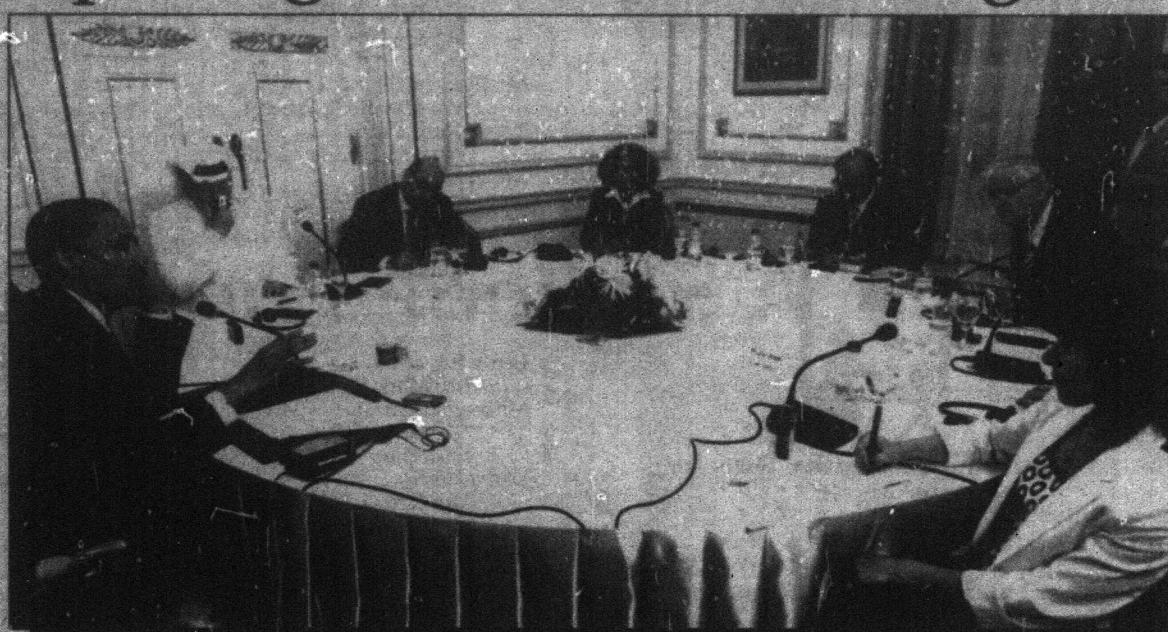
"Temporal peace is part of God's desire for humanity but the peace of worshipping God and being known by him is of first importance in both religions. While we can work together on the agenda the President laid out, we Christians must also bear witness to the truth that God has made peace with man in Jesus Christ and true peace without Him is not possible.

Jim Sibley

Jim Sibley, director of the Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies at Criswell College in Dallas, said Obama's speech ignored the biblical view of Israel and failed to mention the President's own intention to divide Jerusalem.

"There is much to commend in President Obama's speech, and it will doubtless be well received by many in the region. To the extent that it promotes peace and the cessation of hostilities, it is to be welcomed. However, it is not built upon a biblical view of Israel. The President claimed that America's bonds with Israel are based upon 'cultural and historical ties,' but at the base of both of these lie the biblical ties and the values that issue from Scripture.

"The President rightly said that a denial of the Holocaust is 'baseless, ignorant, and hateful.' Yet the Holocaust should be seen in the context of God's promise that those who curse the Jewish people will suffer judgment at God's hand (Genesis 12:3). Hitler and his Nazi regime were destroyed, and they brought shame and destruction to Germany. This pattern is seen



TAKING QUESTIONS — President Barack Obama holds a roundtable interview June 4 with regional reporters at Cairo University in Cairo, after his address to the Muslim world. (BP photo courtesy of The White House/Pete Souza)

throughout history. I would suggest that to ignore this principle is to an even greater extent 'baseless, ignorant, and hateful.'

"For those who wish to live in peace with Israel, every effort should be made to accommodate their aspirations for self-government, dignity, and economic prosperity, but those who promote terrorism, warfare, and hatred against the people of Israel must be opposed. This is a position that recognizes and acknowledges the spiritual dimension to the struggle.

"Furthermore, although not addressed directly in his speech, Jerusalem must not be divided. The Obama administration is already working toward the division of the city, and this can only lead to violence. When the city was divided previously, Jewish and Christian sites on the eastern [Jordanian] side were desecrated, and the Old City sank into squalor and disorder. Under Israeli control, living conditions for both Jew and Arab have been greatly improved and modernized. The infrastructure has been rebuilt. Archaeological parks and museums highlight both the Jewish and Muslim past. Freedom of worship has been ensured for all, and freedom of the press has flourished. The unity of Jerusalem must be preserved for the sake of all who live there, as well as for the pilgrims and tourists who visit."

Ant Greenham

Ant Greenham, assistant professor of missions and Islamic studies at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and a South African who previously served that country's diplomatic missions in both Israel and Jordan, said the common ground that President Obama advocates religiously is too close to Islamic theology for comfort.

"As he made clear in his Cairo speech, President Obama's first duty is to protect the American people. As a means to this end, he delivered a carefully-worded, wide-ranging address. It embraced the interests of broader humanity, as he shared American values. This is what I expected from the President of the United States. As a Southern Baptist with permanent residency in the United States, I have deep appreciation for and commitment to this country. However, my primary allegiance is not to a country (or to humanity as such), but to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this allegiance must color a believer's evaluation of the President's remarks.


"Unfortunately, while Obama told his Muslim audience up front he was a Christian, his speech gave them no reason to consider Christianity's key claims. In fact, he presented an Islamic rather than a Christian Jesus, when he cited the tradition of Muhammad's night journey to heaven. According to that account, Muhammad joined Jesus and Moses in prayer. This may sound quite innocuous, but it put all three in the same human prophet category, which is standard Muslim belief. Obama then added the familiar Islamic line, 'Peace be upon them,' which placed Jesus on a par with sinners like Moses and Muhammad (and the rest of us). In contrast, Jesus, who died and rose again, is the Prince of Peace. He is the only one who brings us peace where we really need it, namely peace with God.

"I wasn't expecting Obama to preach the Gospel in Cairo. However, I would have appreciated equal time for Christian claims, given his decision to cite a key Islamic tradition. There is actually a hidden danger here. President Obama's (political)

desire to find common ground with the Muslim world is understandable. It is infinitely better than embarking on a new round of crusades, and American cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio is commendable. However, the common ground he advocates at the religious level is too close to Islamic theology for comfort. I fear folks who embrace this common ground, such as those who 'turn dialogue into interfaith service' as Obama put it (but don't discuss religious differences), will see Gospel-sharing believers as way out of line.

"To be fair, freedom of religion was a noteworthy subject in Obama's speech. He spoke of American freedom being 'indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion,' and, 'People in every country should be free to choose and live their faith based upon the persuasion of the mind, heart, and soul.' This is good, but all too often, freedom of religion in Islamic contexts means freedom to practice the religious tradition you were born into, but not to convert to anything else (unless a Christian converts to Islam). So I wish Obama had added a phrase on the right to choose a different faith, should one be so persuaded.

"Finally, I do see opportunities for the Gospel in Obama's message. He spoke of 'encouraging more Americans to study in Muslim communities.' Great Commission Christians should certainly take advantage of such opportunities as they present themselves. This means studying what you go to study, but at the same time being a vibrant believer in this challenging environment — and closer to home, it is hoped the 'new on-line network' President Obama proposes... would see many young people prepared to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with their on-line friends."



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THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. The feature is especially designed to honor couples with children and to spotlight those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Ladies from the Carlisle WMU Group of First Baptist Church, Madison recently volunteered their time to help sort and store toys at The Baptist Children's Village.

Married Couple Needed for Houseparents Position

The Baptist Children's Village has an opening for a Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife team without dependent children to serve in the position of houseparents. Houseparents receive an excellent salary with benefits and work a 10 days on, 5 days off work schedule. All qualified candidates must be at least 25 years of age, have a high energy level, excellent driving record and no criminal history. They also must have at a minimum a high school education or GED equivalent. A private bedroom and meals are included while on duty. For more information please contact Kathy Flournoy at kflournoy@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-664-8085.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Know That You Know God

1 John 2:3-17

By Lori Clendinning

Imagine you are a first-century believer. There's no brick-and-mortar church house with paved parking lots, padded pews, or preschool programs. No choir lofts, no hymnals or PowerPoint presentations. No LifeWay Bookstore exists to put the Scripture at your fingertips. There's no attainable print, audio, or video format of God's word for your household.

You heard someone share that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. You heard how He changed someone's life with unexplainable peace as they believed what they had heard or witnessed. You took a step of faith and dared to call yourself one of His believers. Perhaps you even had the courage to be baptized, a symbolic act to set yourself apart

from your religious or cultural background.

But in fact, it's still dangerous to declare yourself a follower of the fisherman's friend. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection remain the topic of heated debate. Your congregation remains under siege from cultural and religious leaders. Many of Jesus' disciples and followers have already been put to death for defying community leaders.

Thus it was when John the Apostle lived. As the early church's elder statesman, John desired to teach new converts that Jesus provided God's people with a relationship with Him here on earth while also securing a place in God's eternal kingdom.

Yet, doubt crept in and out of their hearts and minds. How could anyone know that they truly had a relationship

Clendinning

with God? The test of obedience, the test of love, and the test of doctrine. (The latter will be the emphasis of next week's lesson).

Simply put, the second chapter of John's first letter teaches us three things: We are to love God by obeying Him. We are to love God by loving His children. We are to love God by not loving the things of this world, whether they may be material possessions or cultural influences.

John emphasizes loving God more than any other New Testament writer. His was not a "words-based" message, but that we should "walk what we talk." Loving God means more than an intellectual agreement to do so; it's a commitment of actions. Our lives are to have

with God? How could they be strengthened to stand against the anti-Christian tidal wave of turmoil that existed then?

John purposefully provides three tests whereby believers may be sure that they

evidences of God throughout each area.

By living obediently to God's commandments and yielding to His call upon our lives, we demonstrate to non-believers the magnificence of God. This is not to say that we only know God when we are perfect, but that our genuine desire to please God is at the core of our lifestyle.

Pleasing God means that we ought to strive to live harmoniously with His children. Noah Webster defines harmony as "a pleasing combination of the elements forming a whole." This does not imply that I am to force you to sing my note, but that we are to strike an enjoyable arrangement that draws others to our musical offering instead of repelling them by our discord.

We best demonstrate our relationship with God when we express love toward one another. Are we fervently and sweetly inviting people to join us on Sundays? When our Sunday School classes receive visitors, are they embraced with graciousness and enthusiasm as we would welcome

guests in our homes? When others are absent, is their health or well-being only a topic for gossip or are we moved to check upon them? When one among us is hurting, afflicted, or grieving, do we care to do something for them?

John's admonition is clear: if we hate our brother, we do not live as God's ambassadors. We are fooling ourselves by claiming to live for God if our witness bears a different message than His.

When we declare ourselves to be Christian, we love God by obeying Him. When we proclaim ourselves as Christian, we also proclaim that we love God's children. If we call ourselves Christian, then we announce that God's desires are foremost to us, and we care not for this world's offerings.

By following all three of these mandates we then know beyond any doubt that we have a relationship with God. As the man of God accurately insists, "We will know that we know that we know."

Lori Clendinning is a member of First Baptist Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Receiving the Gospel

Galatians 2:15-3:9

By Jim Burnett

Throughout the Bible we are taught that faith in God always precedes the activity and movement of God. Man must demonstrate his willingness to believe in and on God. To fail to trust in God is not weakness but wickedness. In fact, it was a lack of faith or the presence of wickedness in hearts that kept Jesus from doing miracles in various towns and cities during His earthly ministry. Where there is no faith expressed there is no work of God demonstrated.

The same is true not only about miracles but about salvation. Paul reminds us in our study of Galatians this week that the salvation of God comes to those who trust in God.

Believe

(Galatians 2:15-16)

Is it true that a person, any

person, who simply believes and accepts that Jesus died for his sins can and will be saved? Absolutely, just look at the salvation that came to the thief who died next to Jesus on the cross. In the last hours of his life, he professed his faith in Christ and Jesus gave him immediate confirmation of his reservation in heaven. According to Paul in his letter to the Romans, anyone who called upon the name of the Lord would be saved. Thus we understand that our salvation comes through faith in the work of Christ on the cross.

But what is involved in putting one's faith in Christ and asking God for salvation? It is more than just a prayer of recitation? Believing in God represents much more than an intellectual acknowledgment of God. True faith in God touches

Burnett

a biblical belief?

Behave

(Galatians 2:17-21)

Beliefs dictate behavior. Believing is doing. When a person becomes internally enlightened to the fact that Christ died for him that same person will then want to live for Jesus. A true believer will be touched intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically by the sacrifice of Christ's life on the cross. He will then deeply desire to live in such a way as to honor Christ. Paul said it this way, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me,

and delivered Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20 NASB).

Before Christ came into Paul's life, Paul was an enemy to Christianity, a hater of all Christians, and a stranger to Jesus. After his Damascus Road conversion, however, he became a crusader for Christianity, a lover of God's people, and an intimate follower of Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul's behavior changed drastically after he believed that Jesus died for him on the cross. Has yours? Have the old things passed away and new things come since bowing your heart to Jesus?

Be Consistent

(Galatians 3:1-5)

While in Zimbabwe, Africa in 1992 preaching in several of the local churches, I was intrigued by the passion many of the native people demonstrated during their worship services. Ladies were dancing vigorously with their babies on their backs shouting and raising their hands. Later after the service a local missionary and I were talking about the emotion-filled services when he

reminded me of an important truth: It is not how high you jump that matters but how straight you walk when you hit the ground.

Consistency, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, will give us a continuous supply of freedom and joy in Christ and the ability to impact others for Jesus. However, the slightest detour from the standards of God and the character of Christ will bring defeat and bondage.

Be Blessed

(Galatians 3:6-9)

God's greatest desire for you and me is to pour out his favor and blessings upon us. From the moment of our conversion, God not only is for us but in us and with us. Your birthright as a child of God is the blessings of God. Do you sense His favor on you? Obedience and trust position us under the fountain of God's rich blessings. Are you getting wet yet? Are you receiving the showers of God's blessings?

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

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News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

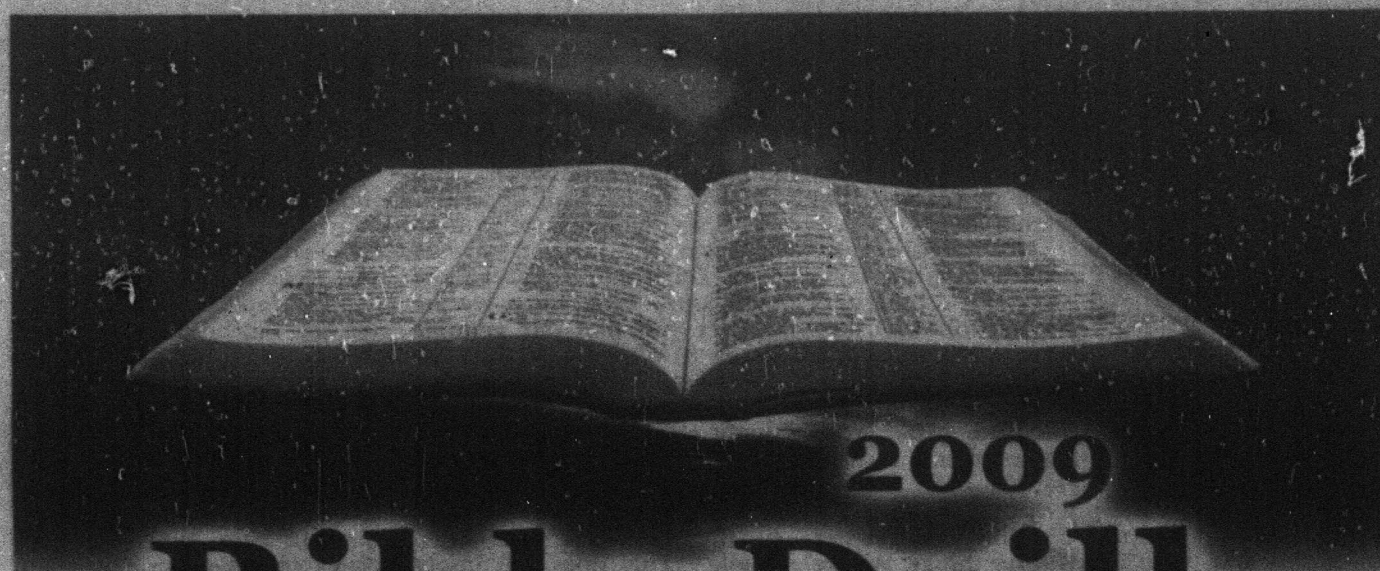
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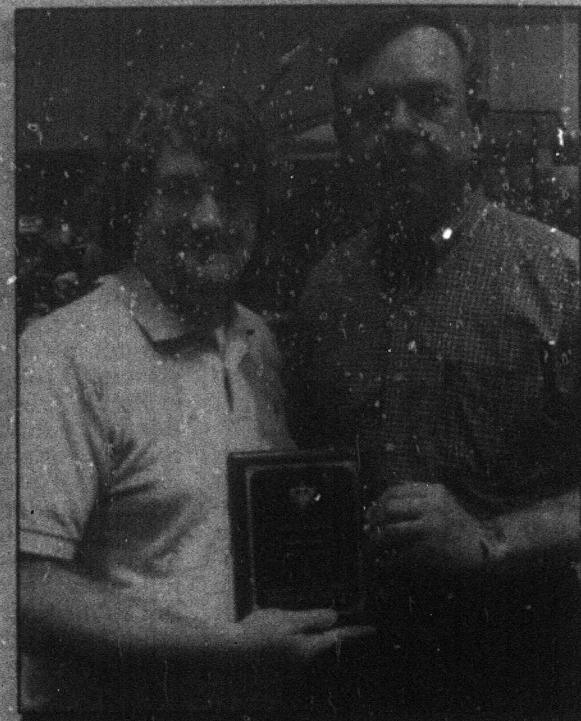
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2009 Bible Drill Finalists



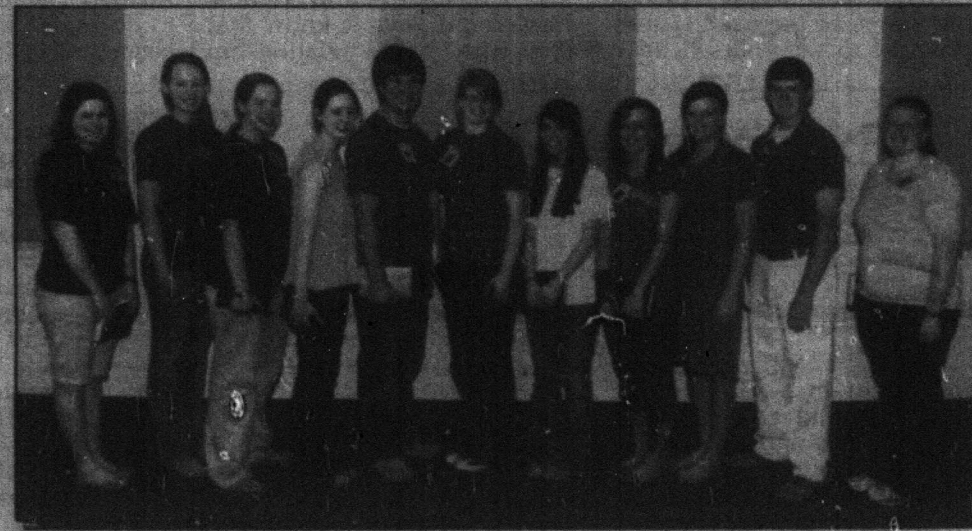
Friend of Bible Drill:

Curt Liles, Crossgates Church, Brandon, left, with Marcus Peagler, director, Discipleship and Family Ministries Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.



Junior High Selection Tournament – Final Round:

From left – Cody Morgan, Brittney Stegall, Kasie Truhett, Hanna Dallas, Sam Lovorn, Steve Lewis, Beth Thornton, Brett Cole, Rebecca Sepaugh, Diane Ward, Camden Perez, and Dustin Runnels.



Nine Year Scholarship Final Drill:

From left – Molly Elizabeth Stillions, Courtney Houston, Judith Pollard, Christy Sharp, Jacob Mitchell, Karen Holifield, Megan Burnham, Heather Teasley, Haley Berry Hill, Joseph Henderson, and Allison Cook.



Junior High Selection Tournament Winners:

From left – First Place, Sam Lovorn, Trinity Church, Neshoba Association; Second Place, Dustin Runnels, Bowmar Church, Warren Association; Third Place, Camden Perez, Bowmar Church, Warren Association; and Fourth Place, Beth Thornton, Friendship Church, Monroe Association.



Nine Year Scholarship Winners:

From left – tied for Second, Megan Burnham, Pelahatchie Church, Rankin Association and Christy Sharp, Harrisburg Church, Lee Association; First Place, Molly Elizabeth Stillions, Oakhurst Church, North Delta Association.